

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:55 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to reception hosts Brian Hermelin, president, Active Aero, Inc., and his wife, Jennifer; former U.S. Ambassador to Norway David B. Hermelin and his

wife, Doreen; and political activist Mildred (Millie) Jeffrey, who was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom on August 9. Representative Stabenow was a candidate for U.S. Senate in Michigan.

Remarks at a Dinner for Senatorial Candidate Representative Debbie Stabenow in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan

August 22, 2000

Thank you. Well, first I'd like to thank Bill and Michelle for letting us come into their home while it's still new. *[Laughter]* It might have been built for this event, who knows? *[Laughter]* It's a really beautiful place, and they're really good people. They've been so good to me and Hillary and the Vice President and Tipper. And thank you for helping Debbie, and thanks for being my friend all these long years. I'm very grateful to you.

I want to thank all your officeholders who are here—Jennifer Granholm, whose husband was giving me some tips on how to be the spouse of a candidate. *[Laughter]* And I listened very carefully. I don't want to blow this. *[Laughter]* I thank Dale Kildee for being my friend and for working with us for 8 years for the interests of the families of Michigan and the United States. It's been really great.

And I can't say enough about Carl Levin. He and Barbara rode over here with us, and we were talking about the last 8 years, and I was thinking about all the things that he has educated me on. But I can tell you that he is one of the handful of people that is universally respected in the Senate by everybody, and when he talks, everybody listens.

I want to thank all of you who worked on this event. I see Peter Buttenweiser back there. Thank you, sir, and all the rest of you who helped to make this successful. And I'd like to say my special word of appreciation to Jane Hart for being here tonight. You know, when I was a young man in college, I worked for Senator Bill Fulbright, who was then the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, and it was a very long time ago. But I remember vividly when I was there, one of the most tumultuous times in modern American history. We had big struggles over civil rights, big struggles

over riots in the streets, big struggles over Vietnam. And I remember very vividly how Senator Phil Hart conducted himself, how he spoke, what he said, and how other people respected him.

And one of the reasons that Debbie Stabenow ought to go to the Senate, apart from the fact that she will vote more like Phil Hart would have voted and speak more like he would have spoken, is that we in the Democratic Party have tried our best to work in good faith with the Republicans, and we have tried to end the politics of personal hostility and negativism. And I think almost as important as anything else, Debbie will restore, along with Hillary and President Gore and Vice President Lieberman, a sense of real humanity to our national political life. The American people will say one more time, "We don't like that stuff. We sent you up there to do a job. We want you to treat each other with respect, and we want you to show up for work every day." That is the legacy of Phil Hart that I remember and one I will always remember. And I'm very honored that you're here tonight, Jane, and I thank you very much.

I'd also like to say at the last meeting—I don't even know if he's here tonight but—if he came over here—but I saw Matt Frumin, who was one of the original co-chairs of my Saxophone Club who is now running for Congress in the 11th district. *[Laughter]* And he's really doing a good job, and I hope you'll help him as well.

Now, if you heard what I said in Los Angeles, I don't know that I have much more to say about—*[laughter]*—about what I think this election is all about. But I will try to be briefer and more colloquial. First of all, I am profoundly grateful to the people of Michigan for

voting for me twice, by big margins, the last time by almost twice the margin by which we prevailed in the country. The people of this State have been good to me and have come to reflect the diversity and the success that has been the hallmark of America in these last 8 years. And I'm very, very grateful.

Secondly, this is the first time in 26 years they've held an election when I wasn't on the ballot. [Laughter] I used to have to run every 2 years. And as I've often joked, most days I'm okay about it, because I feel—my heart is full of gratitude, and I'm really rather looking forward to trying to figure out what to do in the next chapter of my life and how to be a good citizen. I have 5 months, and I intend to do a great deal in these last 5 months as President. But I speak today also as someone who for most of his political life was a citizen activist.

I was 8 years old handing out cards for my uncle who was running for the legislature. I spent 20 years working for other people before I spent 24 years scurrying around on my own behalf and also working for other people. And what I would like to say to you is, I have now lived long enough to know that sometimes you're most in trouble in political life when you think you're least in trouble. You're most vulnerable as a people when we think we're least vulnerable. And the big danger when things are going well is that you think you can go to sleep.

There are a lot of young people here. Bill and Michelle and their wonderful kids are here. A lot of the rest of you brought your kids here. And they, most of them, don't know this, but anybody who is over 30 years old has lived long enough to have made at least one whopper of a mistake in your life, not when times are going real poorly but when times were going so well you thought there was simply no consequence to the failure to concentrate. If you live long enough, you'll make one of those mistakes.

And so what I want to say is, if the people of Michigan understand the difference in Debbie's voting record and her opponent, if they understand the difference in her positions on the issues that are hanging fire today and her opponent's, if they understand the general difference in her approach to how America should go into the 21st century and her opponent's, she will win the election. I don't think any of you doubt that.

So wouldn't it be ironic if the big adversary of Al Gore and Joe Lieberman and the new

candidate in my family, Hillary—and some of you have already helped, and for that I am very grateful—and Debbie was the very success that all of us have worked so hard to help the American people create. Now, that is what I want you to think about.

And I don't want you to just think about it tonight; I want you to think about it every day between now and the election. Because, as much as I appreciate the money you have contributed to her campaign and as much as I hope you'll keep trying to help her and all the rest of our crowd's races, it's not enough, because America has to be thinking about this election in order for us to prevail. We can't sleepwalk through it. We can't sort of sidle into it. We've got to actually think, "Oh, my goodness, there's an election, the only time in my lifetime we've had this much prosperity with the absence of domestic crisis and foreign threat. We have the chance to build the future of our dreams for our kids. What is this about?"

And every one of you know lots and lots of people who are far less involved in politics than you are, people who are your relatives, people who are your friends, people with whom you work, people with whom you worship, people with whom you play golf or bowl or whatever you do. You know a lot of people that you really like and care about who aren't nearly as into this as you are. But they're good people, and they're good citizens, and they're going to show up on election day. They're going to vote, sure as the world. If they have to walk through the ice, they'll go vote. Don't you want them to know what this is about, and don't you want them to have at least the same framework you do?

This is the whole shooting match, folks. We have the chance to build the future of our dreams for our children. It's a big election. We will never forgive ourselves if we sleepwalk through it. It may not come around again in your lifetime.

If you heard my convention speech, you heard me talking about the late sixties. That's the last time we had an economic run this long. And I'm telling you, I finished high school in the middle of it, and if anybody had told me that within 2 years we'd have riots in the streets and within 4 years Dr. King and Bobby Kennedy would be dead and the President that I admired so much, Lyndon Johnson, wouldn't run for reelection and the country would be

split in two and then we'd have a divisive Presidential election, and then the economic expansion would be over, I would never have believed it. I would never have believed it.

Now, we're more fortunate this time. We don't have that level of internal crisis or external threat right now, but we have to concentrate. And you've got to go out and tell everybody you know that this is an important election with the opportunity of a lifetime to build the future of our dreams.

Then you've got to tell people, "Hey, there are real differences here that are big and have practical consequences for the lives of the families in Michigan—huge difference in economic policy." Do you really believe that right now we should say, "We've got a \$2 trillion projected surplus, and we ought to give it all away in a tax cut right now?" Right now, give it all away for the next 10 years, before the money comes in, before we see about the emergencies, before we set aside anything for education or health care or do anything to lengthen the life of Social Security and Medicare or give up trying to get the country out of debt to keep interest rates down, the stock market high, and growth going and jobs coming in?

This is huge. I promise you, most people don't know yet what the difference is in the economic policies of Debbie Stabenow and her opponent, and Al Gore and Joe Lieberman and their adversaries. They don't know. You can tell them. It's a huge deal.

I got a report last month that said that interest rates—best case for the Republican plan—that is, if all this money actually comes in, interest rates would be a point lower every year for a decade under our plan. That's worth for most folks, totaled, \$250 billion in lower home mortgages, \$30 billion in lower car payments, and for those of you with kids in college, \$15 billion in lower student loan payments. This is a huge deal.

And never mind what happens if the money doesn't come in. We don't have to spend it if it doesn't come in, but I promise you, if they have a tax cut next year and give it all away, they're not going to turn around and raise taxes if it doesn't come in, and we'll be right back in the soup again. And a lot of you have heard my little joke, but it really does remind me—their position is like getting one of those letters in the mail from Ed McMahon—[laughter]—you know, the Publishers Clearing House,

the sweepstakes letter. "You may have won \$10 million." Wow! If you ran out and spent the money the next day, you should seriously consider supporting her opponent in this election. [Laughter] But if you didn't, I hope you'll stick with her and with Al Gore and Joe Lieberman and all the people that have been a part of the enormous effort to give you the chance to build the America we enjoy today.

There are huge differences in the environment. We believe you can improve the environment and grow the economy. I think we've got lots of evidence, don't you? We have 22 million jobs, cleaner air, cleaner water, safer food, 3 times as many toxic waste dumps cleaned up, 43 million more Americans breathing air that meets Federal air standards, and the best economy in history. If you do it right, you can do it. Now, they've got a commitment to weaken that. This is a serious choice. You have to make a choice.

And this Medicare drug issue, it's a big deal. The average 65-year-old in America has a life expectancy of 83. People over 65 in America have the highest life expectancy of any group of seniors in the world. But if you want people to live longer and live well, they have to have access to medicine. Our plan would give everybody that needs it access to it. It clearly can be paid for, notwithstanding her opponent's attacked her over this because it costs so much. Let me just tell you something; they have the Congressional Budget Office; they give us the cost estimates. By their estimates—by their estimates, not ours—we can pay for the drug plan she wants to vote for; we can have a sizable tax cut to help people with education, long-term care, marriage penalty relief, retirement savings; we can invest in education; and we can still get the country out of debt because we have a cushion in case the money doesn't come in.

Now, those are the facts. There's a huge difference here, big difference in the Patients' Bill of Rights. There's a big difference in gun safety legislation. You know, the previous administration, they vetoed the Brady bill. This crowd is against closing the gun show loophole. The congressional leadership was against putting 100,000 police on the street and another 50,000—this ticket says they'll get rid of the program that I've worked so hard for.

I mean, it's not like you don't have a test here. Crime is at a 25-year low. If you put

more police on the street, they stop people from committing crimes, if they're smart and they do it right. If you keep more guns out of the hands of criminals and children, you don't have as many people dying. It's not like there's no test here. There's a big difference. You've got to make sure people understand this.

They're committed to repealing *Roe v. Wade*. Al Gore is committed to continuing it. Debbie Stabenow will have to vote on who gets appointed to the Supreme Court. It's a big deal. You have to decide what you believe.

So I just want to say, I'm not trying to make you—everybody wants to be happy now because things are going so well, and I'm happy they're going well. But I'm telling you—and I'd like to sort of ride off into the sunset singing “Happy Trails”—[laughter]—but life doesn't work that way. Just because somebody's term is over, everything that needs to be done doesn't go away.

We've got a chance to go out and reach these—the Native American reservations, these inner-city neighborhoods, these poor rural towns that don't have any kind of economic recovery, and give them jobs and businesses. It will help all the rest of us. We've got all kinds of opportunities out there, but I'm telling you, there are huge choices. You just remember what I said. If somebody asks you what's the difference in

Stabenow-Abraham, Gore-Bush on economic policy, can you answer? What's the difference on the Patients' Bill of Rights? What's the difference on Medicare drugs? What's the difference on the environment? What's the difference on gun safety, closing the gun show loophole? What's the difference on choice? Can you answer?

You have got to be able to talk to other people between now and November and tell them it may be 50 years before we have a time like this again, and we can't blow it. And I want to tell you something. I worked with this woman for years now. She is special. She is strong. She has a good heart, a good mind, and she's a good politician in the best sense. And you'll be very, very proud of her when you put her in the Senate.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:53 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to dinner hosts Bill and Michelle O'Reilly; State Attorney General Jennifer M. Granholm and her husband, Dan Mulhern; Senator Carl Levin and his wife, Barbara; philanthropist Peter L. Bittenweiser; and Jane Hart, widow of former Senator Philip A. Hart.

Remarks on the Electricity Shortage in California and an Exchange With Reporters

August 23, 2000

The President. Before I leave for New Jersey today, I want to make a brief announcement about some action we're taking to help consumers in southern California who have been hit very hard by skyrocketing electric bills. I want to thank Governor Davis, Senator Feinstein, Senator Boxer, and Congressman Filner for their leadership on this issue and their work with me.

The wholesale price of electricity has risen sharply in California this summer as a result of tight supplies and growing demand. This is having a particularly heavy impact where the price hikes are being passed on to consumers, as they are in the San Diego region. Many families and small businesses in San Diego have

seen their electric bills more than double. I've heard reports of senior citizens on fixed incomes being forced to choose between medicine and air-conditioning.

Today we're taking three new steps to help ease the burden. First, Secretary Richardson has asked the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to expedite its investigation of the wholesale power markets, so we can better understand what is happening in California and provide policymakers with the information they need to protect consumers in a timely fashion.

Second, I'm directing the Department of Health and Human Services and Secretary Shalala to release \$2.6 million in Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program funds for the